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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9451  
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0129  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 000315

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WHA/CAR FOR LAURA LUFTIG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NS](#) [CH](#) [TW](#) [PHUM](#)  
SUBJECT: CHINA/TAIWAN: MUZZLING THE FREE MEDIA IN SURINAME

REF: A. 2007 PARAMARIBO 297  
[1](#)B. 2006 PARAMARIBO 802  
[1](#)C. 2007 PARAMARIBO 305

Classified By: A.S. Utschig for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

This cable is the third in a series on Chinese and Taiwanese activities in Suriname in the spring of 2007.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Government of Suriname (GOS) Vice President Ramdien Sardjoe "requested" that a local news show leave out parts of its programming dealing with the China-Taiwan controversy as debate raged in May as to whether China or Taiwan would be the better partner for Suriname. Local and regional media associations protested Sardjoe's action, which he most likely took at the request of the government of China (GOC) embassy in Suriname. GOC embassy staff also reportedly placed intimidating phone calls to one of the show's reporters. Even in the midst of a charm and funding offensive by Taiwan (ref A), Chinese efforts paid off and the GOS muzzled its press. END SUMMARY

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State Intervention into China Issue Coverage  
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[1](#)2. (C) Media reported that on May 10 the popular television news show "Suriname Today" was not broadcast after intervention of GOS Vice President Ramdien Sardjoe. The topic of discussion for the show, which airs on the state-owned Suriname Television Foundation (STVS) was the controversial GOS "One China Policy;" the Surinamese public, press, and even some politicians have been taking sides on whether the GOS should align with long-time ally China or opportunistically take the "bling" from Taiwan. Before the show went on the air, Sardjoe advised station management to leave out statements made by individuals who were asked to comment on the controversy. In his defense, Sardjoe later said that "the China-Taiwan issue is an internal Chinese affair and interference from Suriname could jeopardize the ties the country has with Beijing," and that his intervention should be seen in light of "protecting Suriname's interests." While Sardjoe does not characterize his actions as censorship or violation of the freedom of expression, the Surinamese Association of Journalists did, and reported the incident to the regional Association of Caribbean Media Workers, which voiced strong protest, calling Sardjoe's actions a flagrant violation of the right of free expression.

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Chinese Embassy Plays Hardball  
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13. (C) According to Nita Ramcharan, host of "Suriname Today," GOC Ambassador to Suriname Su Ge played a role. After Su was interviewed by one of the show's reporters, Ramcharan says Su's staff repeatedly phoned her, urging her not to use his remarks in any program in which pro-Taiwan speakers would also appear. Ramcharan says embassy staff even came to the television station to emphasize their point.

The normally charming and mild-mannered Su is rumored to have delivered an unusually blunt demarche to the GOS to complain about the blitz of newspaper ads and television documentaries sponsored by the Taiwan-Suriname Friendship Association (which have ranged from a travel program to a program touting the Taiwanese aid package).

14. (C) COMMENT: Sardjoe's intervention is not the first time the GOS has abruptly cut off discussion of an issue on state owned media, and recrimination between some GOS officials (who say journalists are sensationalistic at best and liars at worst) and some Surinamese journalists (who say officials are incommunicative at best and outright censors at worst) is endemic. Moreover, Post observes that both sides have a point. First-hand, Embassy Paramaribo has suffered frequent inaccuracies and misquotes of Embassy issues on the part of Surinamese journalists, while at the same time experiencing near-constant unresponsiveness from the Surinamese government to Embassy demarche requests (ref B). Nevertheless, what is most interesting in this case is the dynamic of GOC/GOS relations in this tiny country. Effectively, the GOS folded to Chinese Embassy pressure with startling alacrity, especially considering the normally torpid pace of the GOS bureaucracy. If, as Post suspects, the GOC is using the GOS as its point-man in its pan-Caribbean efforts to insinuate itself into the region (ref C), nipping Taiwanese efforts in the bud is crucial.

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Never mind that it ran roughshod over freedom of the press. Post will continue to monitor reaction to the protest from the Association of Caribbean Media Workers, but suspects that this gesture had no teeth. China scored a "win" in its ability to influence the GOS. END COMMENT  
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